

August 1, 2020

Next Federal Stimulus Package

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Despite enactment of three sizable economic relief packages in the first two quarters of 2020, it appears that at least one more measure to address the economic fallout from the pandemic is on the way.

For Republican leadership in the Senate, the highest priority is liability protection for employers reopening operations. What form liability protections will take is unclear, as several states have recently enacted liability shields for employers, and there is some question as to how a federal statute would interact with these state measures. However, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has consistently messaged that any additional COVID relief **must** include a liability shield for employers.

In addition, the next package will likely extend the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation for those receiving unemployment compensation; provide additional stimulus checks for individuals making less than \$40,000 per year, and include funding to facilitate school reopening efforts, additional funds for testing and vaccine development, childcare to help workers reenter the workplace, hazard pay under the HEROES Act, and bipartisan legislation that would extend and make changes to the Paycheck Protection Program.

Specific to the Hardwood Industry

In late spring, the Hardwood Federation began outreach efforts with some of our champions on Capitol Hill to communicate the challenges our sector is facing during the COVID-19 crisis, and to ascertain if there was appetite for some sector specific relief in this next package. Our efforts proved fruitful.

In July, a letter signed by a bipartisan group of House lawmakers was sent to House leadership advocating measures that would help the hardwood forest products industry. Specifically, the letter asked for provisions that would:

- Ensure any liability protection reforms are extended to the hardwood and forest products industry.
- Direct the Small Business Administration to reverse its decision to limit Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) to \$150,000. Existing law authorizes EIDL loans of up to \$2 million which is essential to the hardwood industry.
- Extend a sustainable building tax credit to building and construction projects, including U.S. wood products used in these projects.
- Increase government purchases of U.S. wood products, including structural and finished products, for federal building and transportation projects.
- Fund necessary research to approve increased use of U.S. hardwoods in U.S. military truck beds, replacing imported tropical woods.
- Provide funding for research to increase domestic and international consumer demand for U.S. hardwood products including the environmental and home health benefits of hardwood product use.

Our outreach efforts continue as we work with Senate offices to include our proposals in the next relief package. The goal is for final legislative action to be passed just prior to the August political conventions. As always, we will keep you regularly apprised of our progress. And thank you for your continued support.